



## A Message From The Secretary

At KDHE, we spend a significant amount of time preparing for what we hope never happens such as pandemic flu, an act of terrorism, a nuclear power plant malfunction, a foreign animal disease outbreak, or problems with our food supply. But, how about you? Are you or your family as prepared as you could be for what may and likely will

come, whether naturally or manmade?

I raise this question because it's important to think of the impact on each of us if we, in Kansas, were to experience some of the things we as an agency prepare for each day. And with the memory of Hurricane Katrina still fresh in our minds, and the impact still being felt around the country, we can see the importance of individual preparations more clearly now than ever before.

We must begin to seriously consider the impact that something like pandemic flu (worldwide outbreak of a new/rare strain of flu) would have on our society and, therefore, on each of us as individuals. Some estimates indicate as many as one in four Kansans will be sick in a pandemic. With as many as 25 percent of people in our communities affected, we would see a tremendous change in our daily lives. Grocery store deliveries would slow as the number of delivery drivers is reduced, and prescription drug availability could be limited while manufacturing plants struggle to keep up with demand due to an unavailable workforce. Other services we count on such as small family businesses (daycares, veterinary clinics) might have to close while the workers are trying to recover. Impacts on police, fire and ambulance staff would quickly be noticed, and difficult decisions regarding who to serve and how to serve them would become extremely challenging.

These are just a few of the things we need to consider as we plan to get our families ready for what could happen. Making preparations will also improve our situation during smaller challenges such as power outages from tornadoes and ice storms.

So what can we do? Make sure we have enough of the essentials on hand in our homes (and cars) to make it on our own for several weeks: prescription medications, bottled water, canned foods (including canned baby foods, pet foods, etc.), flashlights, batteries, emergency radios and blankets. Basically anything you couldn't live without during a disaster, which might last for more than a few days. Think about a six-week supply of these commodities.

These are just a few of the many simple things we can do now, that could very well save our lives in such a disaster. For more details on being prepared, go to <http://www.ready.gov/america/index.html>.

And in the spirit of preparing for needs, our United Way campaign has wrapped up with another successful year! Thank you so much for your generosity! We received \$16,500.24. Your donations will go to help many needy people in our communities during the next year!

Have a safe holiday and be well,